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Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 30 November 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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contingency and sustainability and he looked forward to receiving any additional information required to reach a final decision. The total cost of the plan had already increased by 4 per cent, due largely to the increased cost of swing space; every effort must be made to deliver the project within the budget approved by the General Assembly and to avoid further cost increases by taking the necessary decisions before the end of the main part of the session.

16. He was pleased to learn that despite the delay in choosing a construction strategy the project was still due to be completed in 2014, and welcomed the impending selection of a construction manager and completion of the design development phase. It was reassuring that all relevant staff members had completed the required financial disclosures. It was, however, disappointing that the Secretary-General had not as yet appointed an advisory board, and he requested an update on the board's role and efforts to appoint its members.

17. **Mr. Torrington** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group had always recognized the need for expeditious action to renovate the Headquarters complex and had therefore welcomed the decision taken by the General Assembly by its resolution 60/282 to proceed with strategy IV (phased approach) of the capital master plan. According to the report of the Secretary-General, however, the construction cost had already increased by $4.5 million, and he expressed concern that each delay in taking a decision increased costs. It was important to reach a decision on the financing of the project by the end of the main part of the session, and to comply with the calendar of construction.

18. The Rio Group believed that the host country derived significant benefit from the presence of the Organization's Headquarters. The host country also had special responsibilities, and it was regrettable that it had not complied with those responsibilities.

19. Funding of the capital master plan through assessed contributions was the simplest option. The Rio Group also looked favourably on payments by instalment. It had, however, as a matter of principle always opposed charging interest on arrears in Member States' payments and would therefore need to study carefully the proposal to introduce a mechanism for apportioning charges resulting from any drawdown of the credit facility among Member States that had not paid their assessments for the capital master plan in full and on time.

20. It was important for appropriate care to be exercised by the Secretariat during construction in the handling and preserving of the artefacts, gifts and other valuable works contained in the Secretariat building. If necessary the donating Member States should be consulted with regard to their proper handling and storage.

21. **Mr. Wallace** (United States of America) reiterated his delegation's support for the capital master plan; it stood ready to work to take the necessary project budget and financing decisions during the current session of the General Assembly. It agreed in general with the recommendations, conclusions and observations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and ACABQ, although certain technical issues still needed to be resolved.

22. The Secretary-General must ensure that the project was managed within the budget presented. It was important for the Organization to continually seek ways to contain costs and achieve greater efficiencies by using sound management practices and to control the scope of the project while providing guarantees of transparency. The time had come for the General Assembly to act so that the capital master plan could move forward on schedule.

23. **Mr. Yoo** Dae-jong (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation would have liked to have received the report of ACABQ earlier. It nevertheless recognized the need for the Committee to move urgently on the capital master plan, especially given the time constraints. He noted than in spite of the efforts of the Secretariat to keep costs down, in the previous six months the cost estimates for the plan had increased to $1,646.3 million, not including the scope options, estimated at $230.4 million. His delegation believed, however, that the plan offered a unique opportunity, and supported the recommendation of ACABQ that the proposed budget of $1,876.9 million, including the scope options, should be approved.

24. Issues such as the waiving of the Financial Regulations and Rules in the context of the mechanism for apportioning any credit facility utilization charges, the composition of the advisory board and the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on amendments to procurement contracts still needed to be addressed. Member States must also work quickly to

approve an assessment option for financing the capital master plan. Taking into account his Government's domestic budgetary process, his delegation would prefer the multi-year assessment option.

25. He stressed the urgency of concluding the consideration of the capital master plan. At a time when Member States were asking Secretariat staff to adjust to wide-ranging reforms, including stricter measures of performance, they had an obligation to ensure staff were given the necessary tools, including an appropriate and modern workplace.

26. **Mr. Mukai** (Japan) said that his delegation understood the urgency of the capital master plan, as delegates and staff must be able to work in a safe and secure environment. However, as resources were not infinite, the necessary renovation must be carried out in the most cost-effective manner possible. It was unfortunate that delays had substantially increased total costs. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that more details of the scope options should be provided, and would like to see more convincing justification of the increased cost.

27. The Committee's most pressing task was to decide on a stable and practical financing plan, as the Organization would be making payments to construction companies for many years. Sufficient cash flow must be established on the basis of assessments that took account of Member States' financial situations and that were scheduled to fit in with their budget cycles. His delegation supported a mix of one-time and multi-year assessments, though it agreed with the Advisory Committee that, under that approach, gains and losses caused by changes in the scale of assessments must be considered. The one-time payment option would lessen the risk of deficits and reduce recourse to credit. In the case of multi-year payments, the five-year assessment period was most suitable.

28. **Mr. Stähli** (Switzerland) said that his delegation noted that a decision had to be taken by the end of the main part of the session in order to avoid further delays and escalation of the project's costs; it appreciated the efforts made by the Secretariat to ensure that 2014 remained the end-date. It also noted, with respect to the scope options, the increased security-related requirements and building-operations measures. The scope of such a large-scale project could not be entirely determined in advance, but the Committee should examine further the circumstances leading to the additional requirement of $69.4 million, in particular with regard to additional redundancy measures. His delegation supported the inclusion of the scope options in the base project, especially the options relating to environmental sustainability.

29. Where financing was concerned, Switzerland was in favour of a multi-year direct assessment over five years but would welcome more information about the financial savings possible under a one-time assessment. It stressed the need for prudent cash flow planning to minimize drawdowns from the letter of credit and welcomed the proposal that Member States which had paid their assessed contributions in full and on time should not bear any financial liabilities arising from use of the credit facilities.

30. In view of the precarious condition of the Headquarters complex and the need to ensure the well-being of the staff, Switzerland reiterated its commitment to the project, implementation of which must now proceed rapidly: the Committee should take the decisions on financing before the end of the year.

31. **Mr. Ren** Yisheng (China) said that it was regrettable that five years after the General Assembly had opted in favour of strategy IV the implementation of the capital master plan had still not begun. He urged Member States to move ahead with implementation, for the sake of the Organization's image and the health and safety of all the persons using the Headquarters complex, as well as to secure cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Funding was the key to successful implementation. His delegation was in favour of direct cash assessment of Member States on either a one-time or multi-year basis, and States which paid their contributions in full and on time should not bear any financial liabilities arising from the use of credit facilities.

32. In resolution 60/282 the General Assembly had stressed the special role of the host country Government with regard to financial support for United Nations Headquarters. It was to be hoped that in the present case the host country would make its due contribution to the implementation of the capital master plan. In that same resolution the Secretary-General had been requested to increase procurement opportunities for vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition; he should

do so on the basis of fairness, transparency and cost-effectiveness.

33. China would shortly pay the balance of its assessed contribution to the capital master plan and hoped that implementation would proceed expeditiously through the joint efforts of all the parties involved.

34. **Mr. Sach** (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Management) said that the appointment of the advisory board on the capital master plan was certainly overdue. The Secretariat would revert to the question early in 2007. Under the proposed financing arrangements the costs of drawing down from the letter of credit would be apportioned among Member States which had not paid their assessed contributions in full and on time. He urged the Committee not to invent any more complicated financing mechanisms: the framework set out in the Secretary-General's report was consistent with the guidance given by the General Assembly at the sixtieth session.

Organization of work

35. The Chairman drew attention to an informal Secretariat paper on the status of documentation and informal consultations. The Committee was clearly far behind schedule in its work, and the President of the General Assembly had expressed his concern in that connection. He invited the Committee to comment on the situation and on how the Committee should proceed with its work until the end of the session.

36. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was time for the Committee to look seriously at its programme of work and the challenges facing it for the remainder of the year. The Group of 77 and China was very worried about the slowness of progress in the informal consultations: some items had not yet even been introduced and some would not be ready for consideration until mid-December. It was unfortunate that the Committee should be required to deal with so many important issues without having the necessary tools for the job. And it was wrong that the issuance of documents should determine priorities in the Committee's work instead of the reverse. It would be useful for the Secretary of the Committee and the Chairman of ACABQ to indicate, with reference to the informal paper, how many reports would be issued over the next few weeks and the expected dates for the consideration of the most important items — the ones relating to reform issues as well as to the budget.

37. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) said that all the documents relating to agenda item 116, Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, had been issued but no date had yet been set for their introduction. Under agenda item 117, Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, the same was true of the questions of a strengthened and unified security management system and the conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials, and he understood that the Chairman of ACABQ would present oral reports during the week commencing 4 December on the revised estimates for the Human Rights Council and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF); the first performance report would be available by the morning of 1 December. Statements of the programme budget implications of the decisions taken by other Main Committees were coming in slowly, but the total number of such statements was uncertain for the moment.

38. The dates of the introduction and consideration of outstanding topics were of course set following consultations between the Bureau of the Committee, ACABQ and the Secretariat; he regretted that he was unable at present to indicate more specific dates.

39. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee expected to complete within the next two days the negotiation of the final text of its report on the question of governance and oversight review, which would then be submitted for translation as a matter of priority. The ACABQ reports on the revised estimates for the Human Rights Council and the Pension Fund and on the strengthening of crime prevention and criminal justice were uncontroversial and could be introduced orally in the immediate future. The Advisory Committee was expected to adopt its reports relating to the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the conditions of service of judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) during the week commencing 4 December. Its consideration of the two reports on security and safety had been scheduled for 4 December.

40. The Advisory Committee had scheduled for 5 December its consideration of the one statement of programme budget implications received so far. It had received the report on the budget outline, the performance reports on the international tribunals, and reports on gender architecture for the United Nations and on revised estimates; it would try to deal with as many of those questions as possible during the coming week. It was postponing its consideration of its draft reports on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which did not come to the Fifth Committee, in order to allow more time for consideration of Fifth Committee matters.

41. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee was in an unprecedented situation because it had to deal with the reform issues in addition to the scale of assessments and the many other budget items: it was being asked to perform miracles but could do so only if it had the necessary documentation. It was time for the Committee to reconsider its methods of work, for even if it took up five reports a day until the end of the year it would not have dealt with the reports already introduced, let alone the others. It was clear that a big extra effort would have to be made by the Committee and by ACABQ in order to conclude all the important items before the end of the year.

42. It was unacceptable that some reports had been before ACABQ for several weeks but had not yet reached the Committee. The Group of 77 and China was ready to work very hard, after hours and at weekends, but must be met halfway by the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat: the documents must be produced earlier than the dates indicated orally and in the informal paper.

43. There was a tendency for the Fifth Committee to focus only on time-bound issues, a category sometimes taken to include only the budget-related ones. But it must also give priority to other matters crucial to the effective functioning of the Organization. It was imperative for the Committee to complete over the next three weeks its consideration of the budget-related issues and the draft resolution on the common system, which had been complicated by the introduction of reform-related matters not falling strictly within the Committee's purview, as well as of programme planning, the pensions system, the reform items, and the scale of assessments. Decisions should also be taken on the capital master plan before the end of the year.

44. The Committee should take stock of the way in which the negotiations were conducted: it should seek to avoid the introduction of difficult political issues and linkages between different draft resolutions. It would clearly not be able to complete even one third of its work without moving to "informal" informal consultations, after normal working hours, starting immediately. The Group of 77 and China therefore requested the officers of the Committee to schedule such meetings. They were convinced that the Committee would then be able to complete all of the most important items, if supported by an additional effort by ACABQ. In that connection the practice of proceeding on the basis of oral ACABQ statements was not desirable and should be avoided except in extraordinary circumstances.

45. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that the representative of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, had accurately described the serious situation facing the Committee, which had been unable to take up a number of items on its agenda, despite having only ten working days left before resolutions on those items were due to be referred to the plenary session of the General Assembly. The main problem remained the bottleneck in the transmission of reports to the Committee from the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee. His delegation agreed that the Committee must be prepared to work outside its regular hours, and urged delegations to aim for consensus when proposing wording for draft resolutions.

46. **Ms. Pehrman** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that she remained optimistic that the Committee could make progress on the many items it had yet to take up, even though it was still awaiting a large number of reports. In that connection, the European Union had been relieved to learn that it could shortly expect the Advisory Committee's views on the governance and oversight reports which had already been under discussion for some time.

47. While the European Union was reluctant to put forward an extensive list of items to which it attached priority, it believed that the Committee must pay particular attention to the capital master plan and reform of the Organization. It must both conclude consideration of as many outstanding items as possible and determine which of them to defer to the first or

second parts of the resumed sixty-first session. If it became necessary to work outside regular hours, the coordinators of consultations on each of the items concerned must be closely consulted to ensure that such work was productive.

48. **Mr. Tal** (Jordan), contrasting the current session with those of previous years, said that the deep sense of urgency aroused by backlogs of work in the past seemed to have been replaced by indifference. He was preoccupied at the lack of engagement even over items which were not contentious. As before, the Committee had two options. The first was to postpone the consideration of some items to the first or second part of the resumed session, which only overburdened the agenda for the resumed session. The second was to work outside regular hours. He hoped that a sense of engagement would prevail, and that the Committee would conclude as much of its business as possible, acknowledging that its reputation was at stake.

49. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation was concerned at the unprecedented number of major issues which the Committee had yet to take up. While its workload at the fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions had been very large, it had been able to conclude its business. That looked unlikely at the main part of the current session, which had not been extended. His delegation regretted the unacceptable delay on the part of the Secretariat in ensuring that reports were made available to the Committee, even though the mandates to which they related dated back several months or more.

50. His delegation wondered why the Advisory Committee was taking so long to consider programme budget implications and present its views on them to the Committee. In the case of smaller amounts which could be absorbed within existing appropriations no lengthy discussion should be needed. His delegation was also concerned at the reference made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to negotiating texts for consideration by the Committee, as its role was not to negotiate, but to advise.

51. With regard to priorities, all issues — whether financial or administrative — should be considered time-bound. The Committee existed not simply to exercise financial oversight, but to ensure accountability within the Secretariat. Rather than discussing which items to defer, it should discuss how to work constructively and, if necessary, outside its normal working hours. However, it should also take care to respect the rules and practice of the General Assembly. In that connection, "informal" informal consultations should not begin until after items had been introduced and the initial question-and-answer session had been held, as interpretation facilities were required to facilitate consensus. The Bureau should also examine the possibility of holding evening meetings after 6 p.m. with full meeting services. In the view of his delegation, such arrangements could be made without formal action by the Committee by approaching the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

52. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that his delegation was extremely concerned at the late submission of documents to the Committee and at the fact that the Committee's priorities were being determined for it, an inappropriate practice regardless of whether or not it was deliberate. His delegation wished the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to play their part in expediting the Committee's work, and urged all delegations to work in a consensual, realistic and accommodating manner. His own delegation was prepared to work outside the Committee's regular hours in order to make progress.

53. **Ms. Shah** (United States of America) said that the Committee must try to conclude work on as many of the items before it as possible, but it must remain realistic about what it could achieve in the time available. Her delegation was pleased to hear from the Advisory Committee that its views on the governance and oversight review reports would soon be transmitted to the Committee, and stood ready to work on those and other issues, whether in formal or informal meetings.

54. **Mr. Nikitov** (Ukraine), associating his delegation with the views expressed by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, said that his delegation was prepared to take part in "informal" informal consultations, and supported the Chairman's initiative to hold meetings between the Bureau and the coordinators for each item in order to review progress.

55. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that he wished to clarify some portions of his earlier statement which had given rise to comments. First, the Advisory Committee had offered oral statements on revised estimates relating to the United Nations Joint

Staff Pension Fund, the Human Rights Council and strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice in order to facilitate consideration of the relevant reports and note of the Secretary-General (A/61/530, A/61/577 and A/C.5/61/10), and because the Secretary-General had indicated a belief that those bodies' requirements could be accommodated within existing resources and reflected as appropriate in the second performance report. He suggested that the Advisory Committee could simply provide written texts of its oral statements with a view to saving time.

56. Second, the Advisory Committee's consideration of the report of the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the independent Steering Committee on the Comprehensive Review of Governance and Oversight (A/60/883 and Add.1 and 2) had been unavoidably complex, as it involved examining the views of the representatives of the Secretary-General, the members of the independent Steering Committee, the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, the Board of Auditors and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit. He had sought assurances from the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management that the Advisory Committee report, which would be complete very soon, would be translated and issued rapidly.

57. Third, with regard to "negotiations" within the Advisory Committee, he assured the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that his use of that term had not implied that the Advisory Committee went beyond technical issues and ventured into the realm of political issues. He was very careful to ensure that that did not happen.

58. Finally, the role of the Advisory Committee was to study and carefully examine proposals which the Secretary-General put forward in response to requests from the General Assembly. Its members prepared for the twice-daily Advisory Committee meetings during evenings and weekends. He wished to assure the Committee that he would transmit its concerns, keep it informed of progress and endeavour to provide as many reports as possible as rapidly as possible.

59. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation was pleased to hear that the Advisory Committee confined itself to technical discussions on proposals. However, it emphasized that the established practice must be adhered to: in anything but an emergency, any Advisory Committee report, regardless of its length, should be made available in advance and in all official languages.

60. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, as the concerns and objectives of her group seemed to be shared by other delegations, perhaps the Chairman and the Bureau should meet to discuss the Committee's comments and suggest a way forward so that plans could be made to address the programme of work.

61. **Mr. Golovinov** (Russian Federation), regretting that the backlog of work which the Committee was facing seemed more serious than that of previous years, said that his delegation would work constructively and intensively in informal consultations and formal meetings in order to make progress. Acceleration of the Committee's work would of course place additional responsibilities on the Bureau and the departments of the Secretariat; the necessary "informal" informal consultations should be scheduled in close consultation with delegations so that all interested parties could attend. His delegation also hoped that every effort would be made to hold such consultations in meeting rooms with sound facilities, so as to facilitate discussion.

62. The Advisory Committee should report orally to the Committee only in exceptional cases. In keeping with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, reports should otherwise be submitted in advance and in all official languages, even if the Committee's discussions must be extended in order to accommodate that requirement.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/61/SR.26

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 26th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 December 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
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Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*) (A/61/5 (vol. V), A/61/549 and A/61/595)

1. **Mr. Golovinov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation, which attached great importance to the speedy implementation of the capital master plan, noted the substantial cost increases outlined in the Secretary-General's fourth annual report on the implementation of the capital master plan (A/61/549). It also noted that, over the past few years, the New York State and City authorities had shown reluctance to cooperate with the United Nations, especially with regard to the construction of a swing space building by the United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC), to be called UNDC-5, despite the fact that the United Nations presence in New York had become not only an integral part of the city's life but also a crucial component of its economy, and that the construction work involved in the capital master plan would bring the city even greater economic benefits. Nor did the United Nations receive interest-free credit from the host country. On the contrary, while Member States had lost several years waiting for the host country to come up with an appropriate contribution, the cost of the plan had increased by hundreds of millions of dollars. The United Nations was entitled to greater involvement by the host country in the financing of the plan and every possible assistance from the City and State authorities in resolving any practical problems that might arise.

2. As stated in paragraph 35 of the report, the United Nations would need to obtain bank guarantees in the form of letter of credit facilities. His delegation noted that the need for such facilities, for which Member States would have to pay somewhere between $3 million and $21 million, was due solely to the requirements of the United States construction industry, although according to the information provided by the Secretariat at the sixtieth session, such requirements had never before been imposed on the United Nations system. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/282, for a mechanism to ensure that Member States that paid their assessed contributions for the capital master plan in full and on time would not bear additional financial liabilities as a result of the use of credit facilities arising from arrears of payment by other Member States.

3. Previous statements by the Secretariat made it clear that the approved strategy of phased reconstruction of the Headquarters building had been based on the current staff schedules and organizational structure and did not imply any change in the methods of work, location or scheduling of any services or departments. In other words, after their temporary relocation to swing space buildings, all staff members must return to their refurbished premises.

4. Given the scale of the project and the proposed delegation of wide powers to the construction management company, it was crucial that the Organization's rules and procedures, and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, should be complied with to the letter. His delegation hoped that, in selecting a construction management company and in processing the subsequent numerous competitive tenders for subcontractors, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors would exercise the closest possible control.

5. Since the speedy and timely implementation of the capital master plan depended heavily on steady financing, his delegation would consider favourably the Secretary-General's proposals on allocating the essential financing for works planned for 2007. It also recognized the need to establish a working capital reserve. Since, however, a one-time assessment or a mix of one-time assessments and multi-year assessments, would theoretically make it possible either to do without credit facilities altogether or significantly to lower their cost, his delegation would be ready to consider the possibility of providing incentives for Member States that might wish to make a lump-sum payment to meet their commitments under the plan in full.

6. As for the overall level of the capital master plan budget proposed by the Secretary-General, he noted that Member States were faced with a difficult decision, in view of the Organization's unstable financial position, on the practical advantages of the proposed scope options, the cost of which would amount to $230.4 million. His delegation would be asking the Secretariat a number of questions about such issues during the informal consultations. It looked

forward to constructive cooperation with all delegations in the Fifth Committee.

7. **Mr. Al-Ajmi** (Kuwait) said that, in view of the critical importance of the capital master plan in ensuring that United Nations Headquarters was improved and renovated, thus enabling the Organization to accomplish its mission, the Committee should adopt a draft resolution in order to ensure that works were completed on time and within budget. His delegation trusted that a solution to determining the scale of assessments would be shortly found to the satisfaction of all parties. Kuwait, which was fully committed to the United Nations, intended to pay its assessed contribution on time and in full, without any conditions, and hoped that other Member States would show a similar level of commitment. Much had been achieved, but there should be closer coordination and cooperation among delegations and the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.